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## **POETICAL AND DEVOTIONAL SUPER- STITIONS OF ITALY.**

**FROM THE JOURNAL OF A MODERN TRAVELLER.**

**THE** inhabitants of ancient Italy gradually exchanged their native divinities for the historical deities introduced by successive settlers from Greece; thus the dreams, omens, and auguries of Etruria were blended with the fables and ceremonies of Hellas, and the combination became the state religion of Rome. During the empire, the miracle-loving Romans

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began to substitute the monsters, the enchantments, and the astrology of Egypt and Chaldæa for the worn-out, but still publicly worshipped, state-gods; and finally, after the establishment of Christianity, the elementary spirits of Teutonic superstition raised into importance and celebrity by the witch tribunals and other legislative prohibitions of Charlemagne, found their way to Italy, in tales and legends which took a deep and lasting hold of its imaginative inhabitants. It would not be difficult, even in the present day, to separate and class these heterogeneous elements of Italian superstition, were it worth while to trace them to their respective sources. To general readers, however, some illustrative details of their actual working, and wide diffusion in the lower classes of Italian society will be more acceptable. Amidst the numerous vestiges of antique customs, discoverable in modern Italian life, occur not a few of the purest heathenism. For instance, in the cathedral of Isernia, in Molise, is still preserved, and honoured under another name, the Egyptian Phallas. Some of the female peasants in the rural districts of Naples wear small figures of Priapus on their bosoms to prevent sterility, while others, for the same purpose, wear small pictures of certain Christian saints. Thus have many objects of heathen worship, masking their origin under modern names, maintained their ground amidst the images and relics of the Romish church.

The tales of spectral appearances and haunted houses, which occasionally occur in Italy, are modified by the cheerful habits of the people, and generally assume a lively and even ludicrous character. The midnight ghost, which, in northern Europe, is associated with awful groans and rattling chains, becomes in Italy a teasing and a playful spirit, and is called a *spirito folletto*. These spirits riot amidst the glasses and china, talk to the cats, open and shut doors with sudden violence, or, when in an angry mood, toss the sleepers out of their beds upon the floor. This *non lascia dormire la gente* is, however, the most grievous offence of which the Italians accuse the *spirito folletto*. Instances of haunted houses are of rare occurrence; but for many years a house in Rome, between the Lateran and S. Maria-Maggiore remained uninhabited, because at midnight a monk was heard to read the mass and ring his bell. The Romans attach no importance to dreams and omens, except as materials for humorous and speculative discussion. Indeed, the superstitious faculties of the Italians generally are so fully occupied by the miracles of their numerous saints, and by the mysterious powers of relics and pictures, that the belief in any supernatural agency, unconnected with their religion, lays but slender hold of their credulity, and is nearly confined to the fair sex, who, in Rome especially, are prone to believe in the existence and active agency of witchcraft. The meetings of the Roman witches, who are numerous, and composed of young as well as old women, take place in the ancient Forum, or Campo Vaccino. Here are celebrated the nocturnal orgies, of which the most festivo and important occurs on St. John's night, when they assemble in great

numbers, and in the shape of black cats with fiery eyes. This transformation is accomplished by the aid of a mysterious ointment, supposed to consist in great measure of the root of pimpernel or burnet. With this they anoint themselves from head to foot, a process which will remind the classical reader of the Thessalian enchantresses. These witches are said to compound beverages which provoke love or hatred; they create bad weather, and operate upon the absent by incantations. The greatest crime imputed to them is the sucking of children, who become, in consequence, by quick or slow gradations dry and emaciated, and a thin child is said to have been "*Suchiato dalle Streghe*." The belief in philtres is peculiar to Naples, where young men, who fall away in flesh and strength, without apparent cause, are said to have taken love potions. The Neapolitan lover is afraid to accept a lock of hair from his fair one, from a prevalent belief that some pernicious influence may be thus conveyed. The Romans partake not of this apprehension; but, during the Carnival, they beware of eating the *confetti*, which are showered upon them by the female masks, and will sometimes warn strangers of the perilous consequences. These precautions often provoke the lively retort of the Roman females: "*Mangiate, mangiate i confetti. Non siete tanto bello, per aver paura d'una fattura*."

The dread of storm-raisers is universally prevalent amongst the country people, and especially in mountainous districts. A Danish botanist, journeying alone upon an ass through the mountains of Abruzzi, was involved in several perilous adventures by this superstitious terror of the peasantry. They had for some time seen him collecting plants amongst the unfrequented cliffs and ravines, and watched his proceedings with suspicious curiosity. A few days later their district was ravaged by a succession of storms, their suspicions grew into certainty, and, assembling in considerable numbers, they attacked the unconscious botanist with a volley of stones, and cursed him as a storm-raising enchanter. He made vehement protestations of his innocence, but the enraged peasants took forcible possession of his collection, which they minutely examined.—Finding only some harmless leaves and blossoms, and no roots, their fury abated, and, although it was suggested by some that he had probably used the roots in his incantations, the unfortunate herbalist was at length dismissed with fierce menaces, that if he dared to take a single root from the ground, it would cost him his life. In the mountains near Rome, the peasants regard with suspicion a singular costume, a stern cast of countenance, or any striking personal formation, in the strangers who arrive there. All travellers thus peculiarly marked, are supposed to be enchanters and treasure-seekers, and the young Germans, in their black dresses, untrimmed beards, and long hair, are especial objects of suspicion.

The Oriental fairies, who followed the fortunes of Charlemagne and his paladins, established themselves in various parts of Italy, where they still hold a distinguished place in the traditionary superstitions of the people. These local fairies, who are more potent than

witches, and generally of a benevolent character, are not unworthy of record. One of the most celebrated is the Fata, or Fairy, Morgana, whose realm is the strait between Reggio and Messina. Here her glittering palaces sometimes rise above the waters, and dazzle the eyes of mortals with a transient glimpse of those splendours which are so magnificently described in the Orlando Amoroso of Boiardo. This fairy is said to fall in love with young sailors and fishermen, whom she lures into the deep by this display of her power and grandeur. The causes of this optical illusion are now well understood, but the adjacent inhabitants will not be reasoned out of this highly poetical tradition; and in the popular ballads composed in memory of young men drowned in the Straits of Messina, the surviving relatives are said to console themselves with the belief, that the departed are reposing in the arms of the Fairy Morgana.

In Tuscany the mothers and nurses terrify naughty children by telling them that the ugly fairy Befana, is coming, and the Carnival of Florence is opened on the night before the festival of the Three Kings, by the procession of the Fata Befana, who is paraded through the city by torchlight, accompanied by the pealing of drums and trumpets, and the acclamations of the people. The fairy is personified by a colossal puppet, representing a sorceress in flowing garments, and the figure is so contrived as to appear taller or shorter at the pleasure of the bearer, whose person is concealed by the long draperies. This monstrous fairy frightens the children by looking into the upper windows of the houses; and after thus passing through the principal streets of Florence, the huge puppet is thrown from a bridge into the Arno, amidst the shouts and imprecations of the multitude. The Tuscan nurses also call by the name of Befana, or Befania, the good and wicked fairies, who, on the night after the festival, come down the chimney to reward or punish the children, and the little folks carefully hang their clothes, with empty pockets round the hearth, that the good fairy may fill them with confectionary, and other presents, according to their previous good behaviour. The term Befana is also applied to a very ugly woman, and a frightful phantom is called Befanaccia. Manni, in his historical notice of the Befana, affirms that this festival is a relic of the ancient mysteries, and that it especially alludes to the arrival of the Magi. In fact, the black faces of the rag dolls, which are hung in the windows of Florence, on the day of the Epiphany, resemble the Magi, as portrayed in pictures of ancient date. The gifts which the children expect to receive are supposed to be in commemoration of the presents brought by the Magi to the Holy Family. This popular belief is of high antiquity, and in the house of the Epiphani, otherwise called the Befani, at Florence, a head of one of the royal Magi is preserved in the repository.

The fairies play an important part in the popular tales of Tuscany, and their abodes are still pointed out by the people.

The hollows of the fairies, called le Buche del Fate, on the lovely hill of Fiesole, near Florence, are the ruins of subterraneous build-

ings, and are supposed to have been the substructions of an amphitheatre, or of public baths. These cavernous places are shown by every child as the abodes of fairies, and it was here that Charlemagne is said to have brought rich presents to these elementary spirits. Another haunt of fairies is in the Gonfalina between Florence and Pisa, where a remarkable rock called *il masso delle fate*, and resembling an immense square tower, inclines towards another rock of similar configuration. The intermediate cavity forms a spacious grotto, and has a character of romantic seclusion which well accords with the popular tradition. Many curious details of the Tuscan fairies are interwoven with the narratives of the rural *improvvisatori*, some of whom possess no inconsiderable degree of erudition. The marvellous history of Ferragosto and Calendi-Maggio, as related on the first of May by a rustic narrator, was committed to paper by an intelligent traveller, who witnessed the festival of the Maio, at a farm-house near Florence, and from whose journal I have extracted this May-day adventure.

" Tempted by a beautiful spring morning, I rose early, and quitted Florence by the gate of Santa Croce. Passing the mills and the fall of the Arno, I followed the direction of the river, and gazed with delight upon the fresh and lovely landscape. A vine-covered hill was crowned with small and elegant villas, which stood in relief before the romantic cliffs of Fiesole, still surmounted with Etruscan walls, and distinguished by the bold tower which serves as a beary to the cathedral.

" I now began to observe that the fields were without labourers, and that every peasant I met was attired in holiday apparel, and proceeding with eager step, as if to some scene of festivity. Walking leisurely onward, I reached at length a farm-house, before the door of which a young tree had just been planted. Streamers and knots of ribands, adorned with tinsel, were suspended from the branches, and glittered gaily in the foliage; branches with similar adornments, and a crown of flowers, shaded one of the windows, and the air was resounding with the matin-music of several peasants. Suddenly the bowery window was opened, and three young peasant beauties, fresh and brilliant as the morning, appeared in picturesque costume, and repaid with graceful smiles the salutations of their friends and lovers. This pastoral scene reminded me that it was the first of May, and that the antique festival of Calendi Maggio was about to be celebrated by these happy dwellers in the vale of Arno. Soon the rustic minstrels began a lively measure, the young people assembled before the house, and, joining hands, danced with a rapid and bounding movement round the May-tree, while the older peasants were busily arranging breakfast upon a long table under the shade of a vine-trellice which served as a vestibule to the house. These pleasing groups formed a picture worthy of Teniers or Bassano, or rather of the more graceful pencil of Paolina Gauffier of Florence. Taking out my sketch-book, I began to draw the picturesque scene before me, and had nearly completed my pencil-sketch when I was discovered. I

mediately the master of the house approached me, and, with looks of cordial kindness, invited me to join their rural festival. While I hesitated to comply, one of his daughters left the circling group, and, presenting her hand, invited me to join the dance. This temptation it was not in human nature to resist. I added another link to the chain of dancers, and we bounded round the May-tree with increased vigour and rapidity. When the dance was concluded, I offered to my hosts the sketch I had made of their rustic festival, and it was honoured by immediate insertion in the frame of a coloured print representing the Wandering Jew! after which we sat down in cordial intimacy to breakfast. A diminutive and grey-headed old man, who had enlivened our rural meal by many pleasant songs, which he accompanied on the bass, was loudly summoned by the children after breakfast to tell them the wonderful history of Ferragosto, Calendi Maggio, and their sisters Befana and Mezza Quaresima. He yielded at length to the solicitations of the whole party, to which I added mine, being curious to hear a specimen of the quaint and original eloquence of a rural *improvisatore*. Immediately the peasants hoisted the little man upon the table, crowned him with a cap of gilt paper, and invested him with a printed bed-quilt by way of mantle. The orator then grasped a wine-flask coated with plaited straw, and exclaimed:—“Ragazzi! Ragazzi! e voi ultri tutti quanti, ascoltate!” After a pause, during which he applied the bottle to his lips, he said, with an air of ludicrous solemnity, “I had this true and pleasant history from Ferragosto himself. He told it me during his last appearance on earth, and I will give it you so exactly in his words and voice, that you may suppose him actually sitting before you.” Then expanding his chest, and deepening his voice, he continued: “Dunque io son Ferragosto!” (Behold me then Ferragosto!) At these words the excited group became silent and motionless, and the children gazed with eager looks, and open mouths, upon Ferragosto, who now threw back his head, elevated his shoulders to increase his bulk, expanded his arms, and, after looking gravely round the circle, began his recital, of which, however, I profess only to render the spirit, the language being in that burlesque style of the sixteenth century, which is endurable only in the original Italian.

There was once a great king named Charlemagne, who was, besides, emperor of Rome. After many and many battles and conquests, he came into our country with a numerous retinue of great personages; and my father, although nothing but a sausage-maker of Belgioso, was one of the party. King Charlemagne prized men of talent in all classes of society; and my father, who was a distinguished artist in his line, was made much of at court. Unfortunately, however, he died upon the journey, after recommending his children to the paternal care of his good king and patron, whom we accompanied to Florence. The conqueror, who had destroyed so many cities, amused himself with rebuilding the city of Flowers. He collected there the population scattered through the neighbourhood; and

many of his courtiers, to whom he granted feudal privileges, established themselves in Florence, and contributed to the embellishment of this new metropolis.

“Before his departure, Charlemagne wished to see the environs of Florence, and, being attracted by the high celebrity of the fairies of Fiesole, he went there with a numerous retinue, in which were my brother, my two sisters, and myself. When the court had arrived before the *Buche delle Fate*, at Fiesole, the emperor deposited there some rich presents; and, in return, he was most graciously received by the fairies, who granted an especial boon to every one of his attendants. They made the famous paladin Orlando invulnerable; for it is altogether a mistake to say that he was born so. Maugis was endowed with all the knowledge requisite to make a good necromancer; and, in short, every one had some favour granted, except my youngest sister Mezza Quaresima, who would not ask any, and was cruelly punished, as you shall hear anon. For my own share, I requested the fairies to make me immortal. Satisfied, however, with a brief existence every year, I begged only for a renewal of life during the first week of August, and conditioned that this period should become a festival, during which my return to earth should be annually celebrated by rejoicings and banquets. You shall now hear how I terminate my annual existence. I go at midnight to the abode of the fairies, whose door is always open to me, and there I find a cask of wine, the delicious poison of which takes away my life. I drink and drink until I fall asleep, and then I expire in good faith, and very comfortably. On the day appointed for my resuscitation, the fairies bring me to life again in this manner. They cut open a large, fat, well-pickled sow, put me into the inside, and carefully stitch up the orifice. Then the fairies apply a melon to the pig’s snout, through which the grateful odour penetrates to my nostrils. Gradually I return to life; the sow is again cut open, and I jump out of my grave as handsome and lively as ever.

“My brother Calendi Maggio was gifted with music, and ever since, the first of May has been a festival on which the Tuscans honour his memory by songs and May-trees. My eldest sister Befana had the audacity to beg that she might herself become a fairy, and her ambition was gratified on condition that every year, on the night of the sixth of January, she would frighten the children by threatening to cut in two all those who plagued their nurses, or would not eat their porridge without pulling faces. My other sister, who unwisely rejected the proffered gifts of the fairies, had soon reason to repent; for, had she only asked permission to eat meat in Lent, she would have escaped a miserable death. During her pregnancy, she was seized at Mid-Lent with an irresistible longing for a Bologna sausage; and, to make bad worse, she devoured it eagerly, and without cooking. This heinous crime was discovered, betrayed, and pronounced unpardonable. My poor sister was condemned to the dreadful punishment of being sawn in two, and the only remission granted was the privilege of dying incognita in the garb of a

nun. In memory of this catastrophe, and in the Piazza Padella, the very spot where it took place, the sad spectacle is renewed every year at Mid-Lent, by sawing in two a wooden puppet, which is still called the *Monaca*."

Ferragosto having finished the story of his family, which he had interrupted by frequent applications to his wine-flask, threw his gilt crown amidst the crowd of listeners, jumped down from the table, and took leave of his hosts, to attend his duty as a chorister in the next parish. At the same time I quitted the hospitable peasants, and accompanied him, followed by long repeated exclamations from the children of "Viva Ferragosto, Calendi Maggio, e tutti quanti!"

As we paced onward together, I questioned the old *improvisatore* as to the real origin of the festival of Calendi Maggio, and the garrulous old man, pleased with the opportunity to display his erudition, gave me the following details. "The story I have just related," he began, "is no invention of my own. The materials are borrowed from the historian Buonrotti, and, in the works of the Della Crusca academicians will be found the source of all the jokes, puns, and pasquinades, which the people make on Ferragosto and his family. Their adventures belong to the tales called *Fataggine* in Italy, and *Féeries* in France, and they deserve a place in the 'Bibliothèque Bleue.' The name of Calendi Maggio proves the ancient date of this festival, which is a relic of the old Roman custom of celebrating the calends of May. The songs composed for this occasion are called *Maggiolate*: the decorated tree, and the branches with which our rustic lovers decorate the windows of their fair ones, are called *Maio*. This annual festivity, which is preserved only in rural districts, was once celebrated in cities, and dignified by songs, dances, and feastings, which lasted several days; for instance, the grand banquet of the first of May, given in the Portinari palace, where Dante fell in love. Evidence of the former prevalence of these festivals exists in the numerous *inaggiolate* composed by different authors, and amongst others by the magnificent Lorenzo de Medici, whose poems are not at all worse than those of a common citizen. One of his songs commences thus—

Ben venga Maggio  
El gonfalon salvaggio:

and in another, he thus alludes to these festivities—

Se tu v appicare un maggio  
A qualcuna che tu ami.

"One of the latest celebrations of this festival in Florence, was in 1612, when a *Maio* was planted and sung before the Pitti palace, in honour of the Arch-Duchess of Austria.

"The festival of Ferragosto, which is a relic of the Augustan games, is celebrated only in the states of Rome and Tuscany; and the festival of the *Fierucolone*, which is not mentioned in the tale of Ferragosto is of unknown origin. It takes place in Florence on the 7th of September, the day before the nativity of the Virgin, when the female peasants of Casentino and the mountains of Pistoia come to offer up

their prayers before the miraculous image of the Madonna dell' *Annonciata*. During this festival the streets of Florence, and especially those near L'Annonciata, present the appearance of a city given up to fire and plunder. Crowds of boys run about shaking their blazing *fierucolone*, which are torches of oiled paper fixed at the end of long reeds. These noisy urchins pursue each other with sticks, and the streets resound with shrill whistles and the clangour of pieces of old metal, accompanied by the discordant shouts and howlings of the populace. There is in this strange festivity a remarkable affinity with the game of torches celebrated in ancient days at Athens. The players ran about the city with torches; which they transferred to each other, without pausing in their career; and those who ceased to run, or whose torches were extinguished, were hooted at and even beaten by the populace. Lucretius drew from this game a simile, which he applied to the course of human life, and the rapid extinction of successive generations:—

"Et quasi cursores, vitæ lampada tradunt."

Here the chorister of Belgioso concluded his dissertation. We had reached the door of his parish church, where we exchanged a friendly adieu, and I proceeded on the road to Fiesole.

To gain an accurate knowledge of the devotional superstitions of Italy, the Protestant traveller must for a time divest himself of his Protestantism, or he will be unable to discriminate between an authorized belief and a popular superstition. In my investigation of these absurdities, I shall therefore avoid all reference to clerical abuses, and confine myself to those aberrations of a miracle-hunting people, which the Romish church neither excites nor sanctions; and that the papal government often checks and punishes these ridiculous explosions of vulgar superstition may be proved by instances,—to one of which I was accidentally a witness. Passing one evening through a narrow street in Rome, called La Sabina, I saw before a recess a tumultuous crowd of people, intermingled with the papal *gens-d'armes*, who were endeavouring to disperse them. Inquiring from an inhabitant the cause of this agitation, I heard that the recess had been long occupied by an image of the Madonna, which was deemed so unimportant that few passengers deigned to raise their hats before her shrine. This evening, two women conversing in the recess, accidentally looked at the Madonna's face, and saw her eyes moving with an expression of sadness, sometimes upturned to heaven, and then down upon the gazers, who fell upon their knees, and called out, "A miracle! a miracle!" Immediately the neighbours crowded to the spot, the passengers collected round them, and the tale of wonder was rapidly circulated through every quarter of the city. Soon, however, the inquisition, as head of the police, sent the *gens-d'armes* to the spot, with orders to extinguish the Madonna's two tapers, and to disperse the people. This violent interference roused the indignation of the credulous Romans, many of

whom, in the true spirit of martyrdom, allowed themselves to be arrested.

To this instance of popular superstition, the legend of the Pantheon Madonna is an appropriate appendage. The now miraculous image of Santa Maria della Rotonda had long been inactive and unimportant; but one small lamp shone dimly before her altar, which now blazes with the light of innumerable tapers; and not even one votive offering adorned her person, which is now loaded with hearts, crowns, bracelets, and necklaces. One day the custos of the Pantheon had forgotten to feed the Madonna's lamp with oil, and towards evening, after the doors were closed, the sacred flame expired. Suddenly the people in the piazza heard from within the church a loud complaining voice call out, "Oglìo! Oglìo!" The listeners hastened to the custos; the doors of the sanctuary were opened, the want of oil was discovered, and the miracle loudly proclaimed. The custos narrowly escaped from the violence of the crowding worshippers, and on the same night tapers were lighted round the altar of the insulted image, which ever since has healed the sick, forgiven sins, and worked all sorts of miracles. I collected these details from the people, but how far the miracle was acknowledged by the Romish church, I could not ascertain.

Were the legends of the numerous images which patronise the provincial cities of Italy investigated, the votive offerings appended to each would reveal miracles surpassing those I have related. These images were doubtless originally placed in the churches of Italy as substitutes for the protecting gods of Heathenism. In Rome, the miraculous statue of St. Peter replaced the Jupiter Capitolinus, the bronze of which is said to have furnished materials for the image of the Christian saint; although Zoega, the Swede, one of the most acute and learned of modern antiquarians, asserts that the image of St. Peter is the antique statue of an anonymous Roman Senator.

Most of the churches of modern Rome were built upon the foundations of ancient temples; in like manner, Catholic observances were grafted upon old Roman superstitions, and statues of Jupiter and Venus required only the substitution of new heads to become objects of Christian veneration as saints and Madonnas. Of these various adoptions Rome supplies abundant examples. Where, for instance, is the difference between the *Votiva Paries* of the ancient and modern Romans? Did not models of arms and legs, with records of their cure, once hang upon the walls of the Temple of Esculapius, on the Tiber island, as they do now near the images of wonder-working saints and Madonnas? The heathen Romans, after escape from shipwreck, hung pictures of the tempest, and sometimes also their sea-drenched apparel in the temple of Neptune, or made the votive offering of a miniature marble galley to Jupiter Redux. Now the returning traveller offers to S. Rocco, or to S. Antonio Abbate, or to some Madonna, a gaudy painting of his perilous adventures. On Monte Celio, and on the spot where once stood the temple of the home-guiding Zeus, S. Maria della Navicella is now worshipped. Before her small temple Leo X.,

either as a Christian or as a classical enthusiast, affixed a small marble ship, in token of gratitude for his escape from a storm; and from the ground beneath fragments of antique votive ships have been excavated.

On the north side of the Palatine Mount, and where, according to tradition, Romulus and Remus were nourished by the she-wolf, stood the temple of the deified Romulus, in which was the statue of the suckling wolf. To this temple the mothers of ancient Rome carried their sickly children, and their faith derived healing from their wonder-working hero. The rotunda of S. Teodoro now occupies the same spot, and the healing powers of the heathen have been transferred to his Christian substitute, for here only do the Roman mothers pray for the convalescence of their sick children, as in ancient days their progenitors prayed to the founder of their city.

The Pantheon, once the temple of all the gods, was converted into a temple of all the martyrs, by Pope Boniface, who interred twenty-eight loads of relics under the high altar. The bronze rosettes of the dome were melted by the Barbarini Pope, Urban VIII., who recast them into cannon, into decorations for his tomb, and into the Baldachin of St. Peter's. In modern times, this magnificent rotunda has been metamorphosed into a temple of all the artists by Canova, whose wealth and chisel have so thickly peopled the niches with marble poets, painters, sculptors, architects, and musicians, that he has hardly left room enough for his own bust.

In ancient Rome, the consul or prætor touched the heads of manumitted slaves with his rod, in token of their release from slavery; and in modern Rome, the penitentiary gives a similar tap with a stick to the penitent after confession, and thereby releases him from the bondage of sin.

On the first of May, the Roman children place upon a chair before the house-door a puppet of the Madonna, crowned with a garland. Every passenger is then applied to for a donation in the following verse, which is sung by the little beggars:

"Belli, Belli Giovanotti,  
Che mangiate pasticciotti  
E bevete del buon vino  
Un quattrin sull' altarinno."

On the calends of May, the foundation festival of the altars of the *Lares præstites* was celebrated in all the houses of ancient Rome. The *Lararium*, bearing the small household gods, was decked on this occasion with fresh garlands of flowers and foliage, and modern antiquarians believe that the custom of the Roman children is a relic of the ancient festival.

It would be easy to multiply examples of similar coincidences; I shall conclude, however, with one of many instances of Neapolitan superstition. The Neapolitan sailors never go to sea without a box of small images or puppets, some of which are patron saints, inherited from their progenitors, while others are more modern, but of tried efficacy in the hour of peril. When a storm overtakes the vessel, the sailors leave her to her fate, and bring upon deck the box of saints, one of which is held up, and loud-

ly prayed to for assistance. The storm, however, increases, and the obstinate or powerless saint is vehemently abused, and thrown upon the deck. Others are held up, prayed to, abused, and thrown down in succession, until the heavens become more propitious. The storm abates, all danger disappears, the saint last prayed to acquires the reputation of miraculous efficacy, and, after their return to Naples, is honoured with prayers.

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